



March 15, 2019

To Everybody's Column,

The Board of Directors of the Community Action Organization of Western New York Inc. decided it's time to correct numerous errors of fact in Buffalo News stories and editorials. First, the CAO wants to reassure the public that all its actions in the last year, as prior, were fully reported to the appropriate regulatory agencies, including the New York Department of State, responsible for overseeing non-profits. To correct the record:

1. **Fact.** After a board vote on Jan. 7, various members were advised they were not part of the board because of specific legal defects in their election that were mishandled by the former board chair. The board also determined that those former board members held illegal board meetings after improperly removing other, duly appointed members; did not make any written meeting notices or minutes; and in some cases, where self-proclaimed board members made up improper quorums and voted.

2. **Fact.** Those former board members never began a "forensic audit," so their removal was never an effort to stop such an audit, as the News wrote and needs to correct. They never hired a board-approved forensic auditor. The CAO's financial department was never asked to supply any information to said auditor. Therefore, when the News reported Feb. 18 "the work of a forensic accountant they had hired to examine the agency's books was stopped," it is wrong.

3. **Fact.** State and federal agencies frequently audit finances and operations of the CAO's numerous anti-poverty, fair-housing and employment programs. Therefore, it has routine and frequent visits by the New York Department of State [DOS] and other agencies' monitors. Communications to the CAO from DOS in recent months affirmed the CAO board faced actionable items on the conduct of some board members. DOS also made clear in writing that at least one of the departed board members lied, in writing, to DOS.

4. **Fact.** On March 11, the CAO gave public notice and posted its most-recent financial audit on its website, along with its federal Form 990. We should note, however, that this is not a fresh action in the face of admonitions about transparency. Past audits and 990s were always available on GuidStar, now known as Candid. Further, the CAO board pledged on March 13 to live audio stream its future full board meetings.

We heard our critics, and friends. We will be more open. Nonetheless, we would urge News' readers to keep an open mind about articles based only on the rantings of our critics, who morphed into unvetted news sources; or, News editorials written solely based on those articles. These, by their nature, can only repeat and compound factual errors, which lead to faulty conclusions and uninformed demands.

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